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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000934

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GRM AND PRESS UNEASY ABOUT ZUMA'S RISE

REF: 07 MAPUTO 1486

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Todd C. Chapman, reasons 1.4 (b+d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Mozambican press has carefully analyzed the potential implication of Jacob Zuma's rise to power in neighboring South Africa. Concerns include potential regional implications of domestic conflict inside South Africa, particularly given the political, economic, and trade ties between South Africa and its SADC neighbors. Interestingly, Zuma is a known quantity in Mozambique, having spent ten years in exile in Maputo until 1987, where he developed strong ties with FRELIMO members currently in power. Nonetheless, Foreign Minister Baloi has expressed serious concerns about political instability in South Africa following Mbeki's resignation, including potential impact on South Africa's Zimbabwe policy. END SUMMARY.

PUNDITS ANALYZE MBEKI'S DOWNFALL...

¶2. (SBU) On September 21, a variety of Mozambican press commentators focused on what the departure of President Mbeki meant for the southern Africa region, and Mozambique in particular. Ahmad Camal, a prominent businessman and FRELIMO operative, said that Mbeki was paying the price of having ostracized his own party members, causing Mbeki to lose support within the ANC. Eduardo Namburete, opposition-party RENAMO National Assembly Deputy, explained that Zuma often takes a populist stance in order to build the ANC base, while a President Zuma will adopt a more moderate perspective when faced with the realities of running South Africa. Namburete posited that the Mbeki administration had lost power due to its focus on foreign policy at the expense of domestic concerns. Another RENAMO official, Ismael Mussa, said that economic constraints prevented Mbeki from living up to the image of Mandela and his accomplishments, particularly in the area of poverty alleviation, and warned that Zuma would eventually be faced with the same problem as Mbeki. Mussa added that Zuma should be careful not to follow Mbeki's lead and not focus too much on foreign policy.

...AND A ZUMA ADMINISTRATION'S REGIONAL IMPACTS

¶3. (SBU) Commentators did express concern about possible domestic conflicts under Zuma, recalling recent xenophobic attacks that forced the return of more than 40,000 Mozambicans from South Africa. Belmiro Rodolfo, Director of the Center for Strategic International Studies (CEEI), predicted that South Africa faced great uncertainty, but believed that the ANC would adequately guide the country towards stability. Another CEEI commentator, Antonio Gaspar, suggested that a Zuma administration might take a different approach on regional issues like Zimbabwe--but indicated that Mozambique's foreign policy towards South Africa would remain

the same once Zuma took Mbeki's place. All agreed that given the strong political and economic ties between the two countries, and that South Africa is a significant investor in Mozambique, its most valuable trading partner in SADC, and a significant employer of Mozambican workers, any domestic unrest in South Africa could have a magnified impact on Mozambique.

ZUMA'S MOZAMBIQUE (AND FRELIMO) CONNECTION...

¶4. (SBU) Jacob Zuma is one of the best-known ANC leaders in Mozambique, spending ten years in exile in Maputo and even marrying a Mozambican. Between 1977 and 1987, when South African air raids and commando attacks intensified, Zuma was forced to go into hiding in Maputo. Through this difficult period, Zuma developed personal relationships with FRELIMO leaders, which he continues to foster. In the past he has attended high-profile political events, such as the FRELIMO Congress in Quelimane in November 2006, and most recently visited members of the Government of Mozambique (GRM) in early August to apologize for the xenophobic attacks on Mozambicans in South Africa.

...BUT INCREASING GRM NERVOUSNESS ABOUT ZUMA

¶5. (C) Despite previous indications from the Minister of the Presidency that GRM and FRELIMO officials might view a Zuma presidency in a positive light (reftel), and long

MAPUTO 00000934 002 OF 002

standing political connections between the two countries, Foreign Minister Oldemiro Baloi told the Charge on September 20 that he was deeply concerned about the changing political landscape in South Africa and the uncertainty following a Mbeki resignation. In earlier conversations in recent months about the negative impact of Zimbabwe's political instability on Mozambique, Baloi told the Charge more than once that the potential problems with the planned political transition in South Africa during the coming year was his much greater fear.

COMMENT: DOMESTIC ISSUES LINKED TO REGIONAL IMPACTS

¶6. (C) Mozambique's political analysts and GRM officials clearly grasp that if Zuma does not tackle domestic issues of crime, health, poverty, and economic development, he could cause serious damage to his own country's economy and also on its neighbors. While at least initially there is no major change anticipated in relations between the GRM and the SAG, the senior leaders have been working with Mbeki and his cohorts for a long time and any change will be challenging, even if it does offer new opportunities. Of immediate concern, the GRM will be looking for any change which Mbeki's departure may have on SAG policy on Zimbabwe.

Chapman